

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

May 17, 2004
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Marshall, Deputy Mayor Noble, and Councilmembers Balducci, Chelminiak, Davidson, Degginger, and Lee

ABSENT: None

1. Executive Session

Mayor Marshall called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and noted an Executive Session will be held at the end of the 8:00 p.m. Regular Session.

2. Study Session

(a) New City Building – Scope and Budget Direction

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened discussion regarding the New City Building project scope and budget.

Lynne Allison, Chair of Bellevue Arts Commission, introduced Commissioner Fred Lisaius and Cath Brunner, arts consultant. Ms. Allison said the Arts Commission strongly endorses the public art proposal for the New City Building. The Commission is pleased with the process used to develop the art concepts, the integration of art into the public spaces of the building, and the use of art to tell the story of Bellevue. The Commission supports the preliminary arts budget established for the new building. She encouraged Council to not use 2002-2009 CIP (Capital Investment Program) funds, including public art program funds, for the new building.

Mr. Lisaius described his work to find the best artists for the New City Building project. He encouraged Council to support the proposed art concepts. He asked Council to not use money from the public art budget for the new building as that money will be needed to implement the new Cultural Compass Plan. Mr. Lisaius noted that public art is important to defining a community and making it livable and memorable.

Ms. Brunner reviewed the process for selecting the locations for artwork in the new building, the three artists, and the art concepts. Each artist developed his or her concept based on a particular set of criteria including physical locale, characteristics of the community, and the budget. The integration of the artwork with the building's design and architecture has been an important priority throughout the process.

Responding to Mr. Degginger, Ms. Brunner provided cost estimates for the three art installations:

- Landscaped plaza and site \$400,000
- Interior concourse 175,000
- Viewpoint location 117,500.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Noble, Ms. Brunner said an additional art piece seriously considered for the new building was a series of stainless steel weeds in a boat or nest shape near the reflecting pool. In further response, Ms. Brunner explained that the living tree piece is in fact a living tree, to be installed adjacent to a silver-colored tree and roots sculpture.

Mr. Chelminiak expressed support for the art concepts. However, he feels the compass sculpture planned for the concourse would work better on the main plaza. Ms. Brunner explained the desire to draw people into the building and out to the view of Mt. Rainier and the sculpture.

Dr. Davidson is enthusiastic about the compass sculpture as proposed. He noted it will provide something nice and interesting to view when Mt. Rainier is not visible during the dark winter days.

Deputy Mayor Noble said he showed photos of the proposed artwork to several people, and some felt the tilt of the tree/root sculpture could be interpreted to symbolize destruction. Mr. Lisaius said the Arts Commission discussed the sculpture extensively and concluded it represents the forested land before Bellevue was developed as a city. The roots symbolize the infrastructure and foundation provided by government. Ms. Brunner opined that the roots also represent the underlying structure and activity of government that is not generally visible to the community. Ms. Allison said the artist continues to develop and revise the art concept.

Mr. Lee expressed support for the art concepts and the story they tell. He feels the compass sculpture should tell a story and not compete with the natural view.

Mr. Chelminiak described his discovery of an aerial photo of Bellevue in the 1930s showing farms in what is now the downtown. He commended the proposed incorporation of concepts from Japanese wood block prints into the design of the terrazzo floor as a reflection of the heritage of Japanese farmers in this area.

Mr. Degginger likes the compass sculpture design but agrees with Mr. Chelminiak that the concourse vista might not be the best location. Mr. Degginger thanked the Arts Commission, staff, and artists for their hard work.

Responding to Mr. Lee, Ms. Brunner explained the effort to incorporate timeless themes into the artwork including transformation and change, the balance between man and nature, and the blending of old ways and new technologies. Mr. Lisaius feels the compass sculpture represents direction and the future.

Responding to Mr. Noble, Ms. Brunner said the issue of whether to illuminate the compass sculpture at night has not been decided.

Moving on, Mr. Sarkozy recalled the budget reconciliation process that resulted in the City Manager's recommended project scope and budget of \$100.4 million. He noted the list of optional project components and asked whether additional items should be considered.

Dr. Davidson likes the idea of a fountain on the new building site and suggested the creation of a foundation to raise money for this feature.

Mr. Degginger questioned the possibility of using metal siding instead of terra cotta for the stairway, the potential cost savings, and the anticipated impact on the project schedule. Planning and Community Development Director Matt Terry explained that the project team could provide a cost and schedule estimate if Council directs staff to further develop this alternative.

Mr. Lee suggested less coverage of the terra cotta exterior and questioned the potential cost savings of such an approach.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Noble, Mr. Terry said the pavilion is included in the project for the following benefits: 1) encloses and defines the plaza corner of the site and provides a venue for public gatherings, 2) adds life to the plaza whether occupied by a coffee shop, nonprofit organization, or other entity, 3) meets requirement for MPOS (major public open space), 4) provides a bonus in exchange for the MPOS, which can be sold to other property owners in need of the development credit, and 5) is more cost-effective to add the pavilion now than later. Mr. Terry said the size of the pavilion could accommodate a number of potential uses.

Responding to Mr. Lee, Mr. Terry commented on the City's role in optimizing public space and the downtown environment. Mr. Degginger feels the pavilion provides the opportunity for an exciting public space.

Referring to the list of potential project components, Mr. Noble suggested eliminating the trellis for a savings of approximately \$345,000. He questioned the feasibility of fritted glass. Mr. Terry said the project team believes sunscreens or shades are a better option, where needed, because fritted glass is darker, more expensive, and obscures the view. Carla Weinheimer, Project Manager, explained that Seattle's new Central Library uses glass containing a mesh layer, which is more expensive than clear or fritted glass.

Mr. Chelminiak reviewed the goals to be met by moving to the New City Building, including a 21st-century work environment for the Police and Fire Departments and a city hall in the

downtown, and congratulated staff for their efforts. He encouraged targeting investments in the plaza as this will be the primary area for public use and gatherings.

Mayor Marshall recalled Council's early objectives for the project including a finance plan that would not raise taxes and maintaining programmed CIP funding through 2009. She acknowledged that unanimous approval of every project component is unlikely and suggested items lacking a consensus can be set aside and reconsidered later in the discussions to occur over the next couple of weeks.

Mr. Lee encouraged Councilmembers to make the best project possible and to not compromise too much on specific features.

Mr. Degginger commented on his ongoing vigilance regarding project costs. He is concerned that contingency funds have already been used and feels it is important to plan for unanticipated expenses once the redevelopment construction is initiated.

Dr. Davidson feels it makes the most sense to spend money now for the best possible project and a building the City can still be proud of in 50 years.

Ms. Balducci described the results of her informal poll regarding what should be included in a city hall. The people she spoke with said a city hall should be an inviting space, a place to gather, and a place that draws citizens in and makes them feel part of the community. Three people suggested a fireplace.

Returning to the list of project components, Mr. Sarkozy recalled that staff's recommended project scope includes CIP public art funding (\$450,000) and CIP gateway funding (\$300,000) for the New City Building project.

Dr. Davidson suggested lowering the amount of CIP public art funding to be used to \$225,000. Mr. Chelminiak agreed with reducing the use of funds from existing CIP programming.

Mr. Degginger moved to set the total project budget at \$101 million. There was no second.

Mr. Chelminiak suggested restoring the \$450,000 to CIP public art funding and reducing the public art scope component of the new building project. If contingency funds are available as the project moves forward, he would be in favor of using these funds for public art associated with the new building.

Responding to Mr. Noble, Mr. Degginger said he suggests a total project budget of \$101 million rather than the recommended \$100.4 million because he feels additional contingency funds are needed. Mr. Degginger is not in favor of using previously programmed CIP funds for the New City Building project. As examples, he suggests modifying the project scope to save money by reducing arts funding, eliminating the pneumatic tube system, and scaling back the gateway treatment proposed for the southeast corner of the site.

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Responding to Deputy Mayor Noble, Mr. Terry said CIP gateway funding is allocated to creating gateways to the community, which is consistent with plans for a gateway treatment at the southeast corner of the new building site.

At 8:00 p.m., Mayor Marshall declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

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